Indiana K-6 Reading Framework

READING ASSESSMENT

	Reading Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Schools			★			

Guiding Principles:

- ☑ Schools should implement an assessment system that uses valid, reliable, and efficient reading assessments that directly measure the essential reading components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- ☑ An assessment system should be designed for five purposes: (1) to screen and place students, (2) to monitor progress of students, (3) to diagnose specific skill needs that may be the source of reading difficulty and lack of progress, (4) to determine overall proficiency and the extent to which students meet the reading goals, and (5) to monitor the overall effectiveness of instruction and the school reading system.
- ☑ The school's assessment plan should be comprehensive and aligned to Indiana's plan for Response to Instruction.
- ☑ Data from reading assessments should be used to make instructional decisions about students and to guide decisions about the professional development needs of educators

In order to implement an effective reading program, schools should have a coordinated and clearly understood assessment plan that includes formative, progress monitoring, summative and diagnostic measures to guide instruction and make informed decisions about the needs of students and educators. Assessment can be defined as "the process of collecting data for the purpose of making decisions."[1] Data from well-designed reading assessments assist schools with pinpointing student needs and identifying and differentiating professional development for teachers, in order to make decisions about core and intervention programs and monitor reading implementation. Assessment data assists LEAs and school leadership to plan professional development, allocate coaching time, identify students who need frequent progress monitoring, and make resource distribution decisions. Indeed, districts and schools using assessment data for these purposes recognize the power of data-driven instruction.

The term "reading assessment," as used in the framework, refers to measures that are conducted systematically and in a standardized manner. These assessments are in contrast to the other informal, ongoing, instruction-embedded assessments that are part of the daily practice of teaching. When teachers ask questions, monitor student responses during small-group and whole-class instruction, or listen in as students collaborate, they are, in fact, also assessing students in order to make informed instructional decisions. These informal monitoring processes are vital to intentional teaching. However, for the purposes of this framework, we are focusing on systematic, standardized assessments.

[1] Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2001

Aligning K–6 Reading Goals and Assessment

A comprehensive assessment structure is the foundation of a successful K–6 reading system.[2] The school's assessment plan should be overtly linked to student proficiency with grade-level reading and the formative reading goals tied to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (see the Reading Goals section). A system of assessment and progress monitoring must begin in kindergarten and continue through the grades. While the standardized state tests (ISTEP+ and IREAD-3) are first administered at the end of grade 3, formative measures must begin in grades K–2.[3] Summative assessments for Grades K-2 will begin in the Spring of 2012. These end-of-the-year assessments will not be mandatory, but are highly suggested and will provide guidance to parents and teachers about a child's developmental reading progress.

The specific reading skills assessed in the early grades serve as the foundation for comprehension of grade-level content. Research on the prevention and early remediation of reading problems compels schools to implement early reading assessments that have demonstrated strong predictive value.[4] Early identification of both student reading problems and school-wide reading challenges allow for prompt intervention. Scientifically-based research studies have demonstrated the value of regular and ongoing assessment to ensure students remain on track.[5] The following table summarizes findings that make the case for an assessment plan that includes

Key Terms

Reliable: A dependable, consistent measurement of a specific trait or measurement.

Valid: An assessment that accurately measures the identified trait or ability.

[2] Consortium on Reading Excellence, 2008; Kamil et al., 2008; No Child Left Behind, 2002; Torgesen & Miller, 2009; Florida Center on Reading Research, http://www.fcrr.org/assessmentReadingFirst.shtm
[3] Gersten et al., 2009
[4] Torgesen, American Federation of Teachers, 1998
[5] Fuchs & Fuchs, 1999; Shinn, 1998

reliable and valid measures in grades K–3, as well as ongoing screening and monitoring measures for upper elementary grades.

Why Use Early Reading Assessments?
1. Patterns of reading development form early and remain static unless interventions occur, which are usually more expensive than prevention.[6]
2. Without intense and often costly intervention, struggling readers do not catch up to their peers. In fact, the gap between strong and weak readers grows.[7]
3. Reading interventions that do not begin until grade 3 or later are less successful and less cost-effective.[8]

Assessment Purposes

A school's Reading Plan should include assessments that address five main purposes:

1. *identify* and *screen* students at the beginning of the year to determine who may be at risk for reading difficulties
2. *monitor* student progress to determine whether students are making adequate progress toward preset goals
3. *diagnose* specific skill needs that may warrant a more intensified and individualized intervention when a student is not making sufficient progress despite targeted core instruction and intervention
4. determine through *summative* measures whether students are reading with sufficient proficiency to meet grade-level reading goals and whether the collective grade and/or school achievement indicates overall program effectiveness

[6] Torgesen, 1998, 2000, 2001
[7] Torgesen, 2000, 2001; Juel 1988; Clay,1983
[8] Torgesen, 2000, 2001; National Research Council, 1998; Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001; Torgesen & Miller, 2009

5. *monitor* through *curriculum-embedded and standards-based progress-monitoring assessments* the extent to which students are learning the skills and content they are taught in their specific curriculum to determine effectiveness and identify school, grade, or teacher support and professional development needs

It is often true that a school may use a particular assessment measure for more than one purpose. When used at different points in time, certain measures can screen students, monitor progress, and determine whether students have met important formative outcomes. The next section explores each of the specific assessments that should be in a school's Reading Plan.

Screening Measures

Screening tests provide information about the knowledge and skill base of a student. They should be quick and repeatable so that they may be used efficiently. They can determine the most important instructional starting point, guide instructional grouping and placement decisions, and identify students who need more in-depth assessment. Screening measures involve all children and are usually administered at set benchmark points, typically the beginning, middle, and end of a school year or unit in a core program. Screening tests serve to identify students at risk of reading failure, students on track to meet grade-level goals, and students above grade level. Students who are well below grade-level expectations are deemed "high risk" and will require greater instructional support than students who are determined to be "low risk." The level of risk determines the intensity and type of support students may need:

- **Low risk**: Provide grade-level support and instruction with appropriate in-class differentiated instruction for students who are reading at or above grade level.
- **Some or moderate risk**: Provide moderate additional support and intervention for students somewhat below grade-level expectations.

- **High risk**: Provide added and intensified support for students substantially below grade-level expectations.

Screening represents the first entry point into subsequent tiers of instruction and intervention. Screening can be done more than once and serves three important purposes:

1. identify students in need of further, more in-depth assessment and possible movement to Tier 2 and more intensified instruction;
2. provide feedback about class and school performance to help school leadership identify when individual teachers or groups of teachers might need added support;
3. identify students who slip through earlier screening but are then identified at later points in their school careers.[9]

DIBELS and English Learners

DIBELS have been used appropriately with English learners for assessing and monitoring progress in acquisition of early reading skills. However, decisions to administer DIBELS should be consistent with the students' Individual Learning Plans, and teachers should consider the students' English proficiency levels when interpreting the data.

In the primary grades, screening tests should measure phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Presently, the mCLASS®: Reading 3D™ system, which includes DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and TRC (Text Reading Comprehension), is used to screen K–2 students and to monitor progress.[10] DIBELS are a series of short tests that screen and monitor the early literacy skills of phonemic awareness, letter names, phonics, and oral reading fluency. Text Reading Comprehension

[9] National Center on Response to Intervention. http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=613&Itemid=2
[10] Haager & Windmueller, 2001

screens print concepts and comprehension. In grade 3-6, screening measures may start with oral reading fluency and comprehension or with the careful analysis of reading results from ISTEP+ and IREAD-3. Screening should occur at least three times a year in the elementary grades, ideally beginning within the first month of school. The following charts show the skills to be used as screeners at different levels according to Indiana's mCLASS®: Reading 3D™ Alignment Guide for Grades K–2 and based on DIBELS formative assessment measures for grade 3.

ALL MEASURES and Time of Year (TOY)

DIBELS 6								
Grade Level and Time of Year		**Initial Sound Fluency (ISF)**	**Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)**	**Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)**	**Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)**	**Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)**	**Retell Fluency (RTF)**	**Word Use Fluency (WUF)**
Kindergarten	**Fall**	Required	Required	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Optional
	Winter	Required	Required	Required	Required	N/A	N/A	Optional
	Spring	N/A	Required	Required	Required	N/A	N/A	Optional
Grade 1	**Fall**	N/A	N/A	Required	Required	N/A	N/A	Optional
	Winter	N/A	N/A	Required	Required	Required	Optional	Optional
	Spring	N/A	N/A	Required	Required	Required	Optional	Optional
Grade 2	**Fall**	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	Required	Optional	Optional
	Winter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	Optional	Optional
	Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	Optional	Optional
Grade 3	**Fall**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	N/A	N/A
	Winter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	N/A	N/A
	Spring	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Required	N/A	N/A

TRC						
All Grade Levels K-2	Knowledge of Print		Reading Record	Oral Comprehension	Written Comprehension	Word Recognition (WR)
	Print Concepts	Reading Behaviors				
Fall	Required	Required	Required	*Required (level I and above)*	*Required (level M and above)*	Optional
Winter	Required	Required	Required	*Required (level I and above)*	*Required (level M and above)*	Optional
Spring	Required	Required	Required	*Required (level I and above)*	*Required (level M and above)*	Optional

The chart that follows shows target DIBELS scores in three categories: high risk, some risk, and low risk. The targets for K–2 can be found in Indiana's mCLASS: Reading 3D Alignment Guide.

DIBELS 6

Grade Level and Time of Year		Initial Sound Fluency (ISF)			Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)			Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)			Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)			Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)		
Kindergarten	Fall	High Risk 0-3	Some Risk 4-7	Low Risk 8+	High Risk 0-1	Some Risk 2-7	Low Risk 8+	N/A			N/A			N/A		
	Winter	0-9	10-24	25+	0-14	15-26	27+	High Risk 0-6	Some Risk 7-17	Low Risk 18+	High Risk 0-4	Some Risk 5-12	Low Risk 13+	N/A		
	Spring	N/A			0-28	29-39	40+	0-9	10-34	35+	0-14	15-24	25+	N/A		
Grade 1	Fall	N/A			0-24	25-36	37+	0-9	10-34	35+	0-12	13-23	24+	N/A		
	Winter	N/A			N/A			0-9	10-34	35+	0-29	30-49	50+	High Risk 0-7	Some Risk 8-19	Low Risk 20+
	Spring	N/A			N/A			0-9	10-34	35+	0-29	30-49	50+	0-19	20-39	40+
Grade 2	Fall	N/A			N/A			N/A			0-29	30-49	50+	0-25	26-43	44+
	Winter	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			0-51	52-67	68+
	Spring	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			0-69	70-89	90+
Grade 3	Fall	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			0-52	53-76	77+
	Winter	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			0-66	67-91	92+
	Spring	N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A			0-79	80-109	110+

In addition to the DIBELS targets, the following chart shows target scores for Text Reading Comprehension for grades K–2.

		Guided Reading Levels			
Grades and Times of Year Administered		**Far Below Proficient**	**Below Proficient**	**Proficient**	**Above Proficient**
Grade K	BOY	All students assessed are proficient.			
	MOY	All students assessed are proficient.			
	EOY	N/A	A or Below	B	C or Above
Grade 1	BOY	N/A	A or Below	B	C or Above
	MOY	B or Below	C, D	E, F, G	H or Above
	EOY	E or Below	F, G, H	I, J	K or Above
Grade 2	BOY	E or Below	F, G, H	I, J	K or Above
	MOY	H or Below	I , J	K, L	M or Above
	EOY	J or Below	K	L	M or Above

The screening assessment measures like DIBELS have been shown to be important predictors of potential reading difficulty and are easy to use.[11] While it is essential that students in grades 1–3 have strong phonics skills, by first assessing general reading ability, which is what a timed oral reading fluency test measures, it is possible to reduce unnecessary testing for many students (see the following box for an explanation of the CBM Oral Reading Fluency).[12] This is because students who perform at grade-level targets on standardized oral reading fluency CBMs are generally presumed to have the necessary decoding skills. It is only when students do not perform as they are expected to on an oral reading measure that further screening of phonics or phonemic awareness is necessary.

[11] Adams, 1990; O'Connor & Jenkins, 1999; Spector, 1992; National Center on RtI, 2009
[12] Shinn, 2010

Timed Oral Reading Fluency: What It Really Measures

Educators are often misinformed about the CBM referred to as Oral Reading Fluency. While a test of oral reading fluency measures how fast a student reads, it is intended to serve as a test of general reading ability. This characteristic makes a test of oral reading fluency similar to that of an informal reading inventory, as the teacher can listen to a student and determine through timing and tracking word accuracy how well the student actually reads, providing information not about reading faster but about reading better. This is especially true if the teacher also attends to a student's expression while reading. Although a test of oral reading fluency will not directly measure reading comprehension ability, being able to read text accurately and with adequate speed is a necessary, but not sufficient, precondition for reading comprehension, and low scores on a timed oral reading measure warn of likely comprehension difficulty.

In grades 3-8 both the Predictive and the Diagnostic Acuity assessments can be used as screeners because of their alignment to the Indiana Academic Standards and ISTEP+. These measures address reading comprehension more directly than do present CBMs such as in DIBELS. Acuity predictive tests are administered three times a year, while the diagnostic tests are administered four times a year. A maze CBM reading assessment procedure and a timed oral reading measure are also useful next-step screeners for older students who exhibit inadequate comprehension on the Acuity Predictive or Diagnostic tests or on ISTEP+. A maze comprehension measure, unlike a standard oral reading measure, is able to gauge whether students sufficiently understand a text passage to be able to select appropriate vocabulary words that have been systematically omitted from a given passage. The maze passage assessment requires students to read with sufficient fluency and understanding so that they can effectively use the context and content of a passage to be able to select the correct missing words. Maze procedures are most effective when coupled with a timed oral reading measure.[13] While an oral reading test is not a direct measure of reading comprehension, it is a general measure of reading ability that is correlated with comprehension. A major study on oral reading fluency conducted in 1995 by NAEP confirmed the high correlation between reading fluency and

[13] Torgesen, 2009

reading comprehension.[14] This correlation was confirmed again by a study in Florida.[15] The reason for this close correlation is the impact of fluency and automatic word recognition on cognitive resources. If readers continue to spend time decoding words, they are devoting too much of their cognitive resources to word analysis instead of comprehension.[16] Some researchers caution, however, that a focus on fluency may detract from using good comprehension strategies such as rereading or summarizing.[17] Also, some students may read with sufficient fluency but still have difficulty comprehending text. While research indicates this is rare, by combining a reading fluency test and a maze test, it will be relatively easy to identify these students.[18] The following table shows DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency targets in the upper grades.

GRADE	Times Administered	High Risk	Some/ Moderate Risk	Low Risk
4	Early (fall)	0-70	71-92	93 and above
	Middle (winter)	0-82	83-104	105 and above
	Late (spring)	0-95	96-117	118 and above
5	Early (fall)	0-80	81-103	104 and above
	Middle (winter)	0-93	94-114	115 and above
	Late (spring)	0-102	103-123	124 and above
6	Early (fall)	0-82	83-108	109 and above
	Middle (winter)	0-98	99-119	120 and above
	Late (spring)	0-103	104-124	125 and above

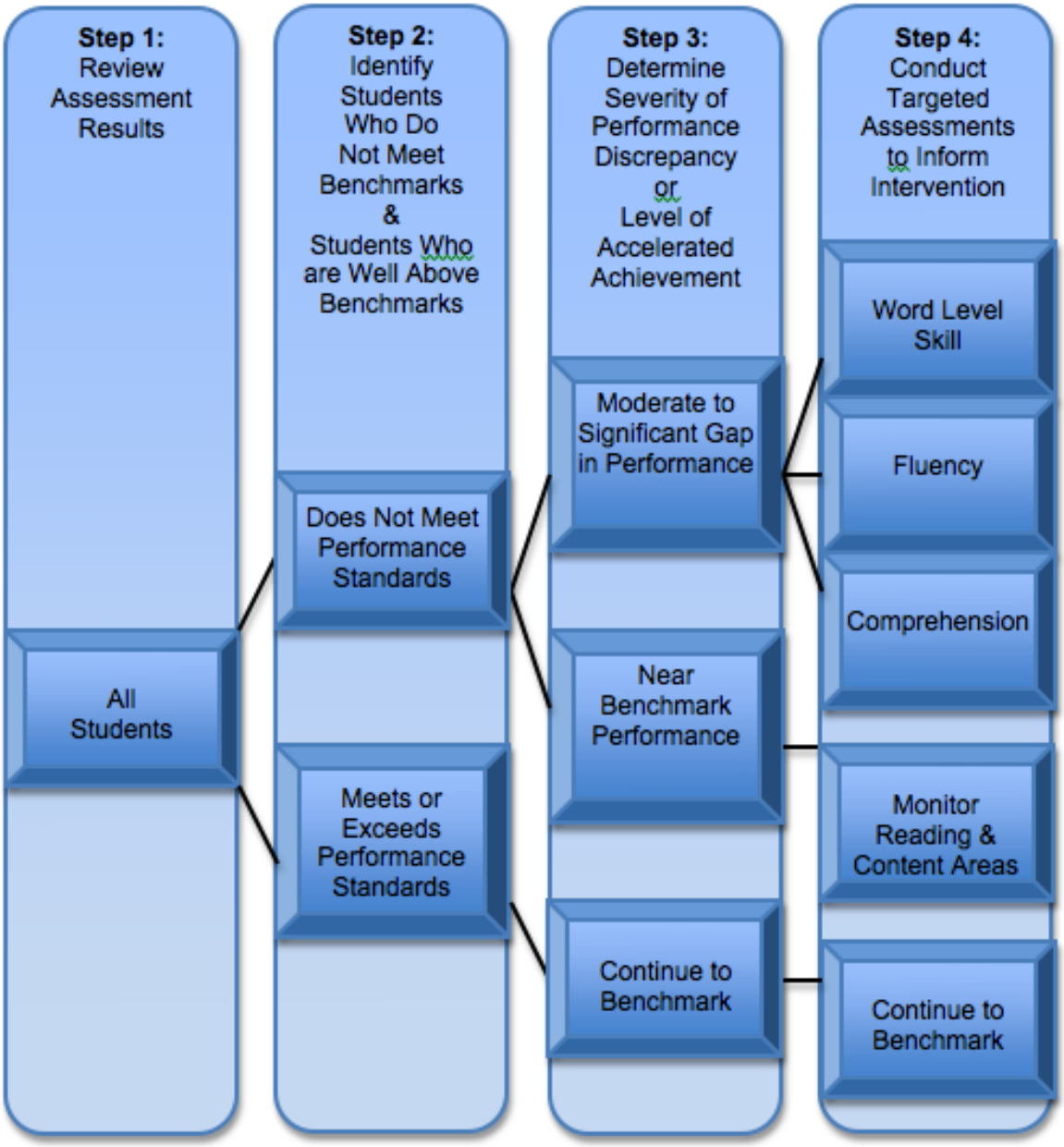
[14] U.S. Department of Education, 1995
[15] Torgesen, 2002
[16] National Institute for Literacy, http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/MC_Oral_Reading_Rate.htm
[17] Samuels, 2007
[18] Shin, Deno, & Espin, 2000; Torgesen, 2009; Johnson & Pool, RtI Action Network; Stanovich, 1986

Using Screening Data

Collecting data is not enough; it must be used. To be useful, data needs to be promptly accessible. Soon after the completion of screening assessments, including Acuity Predictive or Diagnostic tests, reports can be printed for staff. Grade-level team members, armed with the data, should meet after each school-wide screening. The teams should use the information to make decisions about instructional grouping, to determine placement in intervention or acceleration classes or groups, to plan school-wide or grade-specific professional development, and to identify programmatic needs. Screening data not only provides valuable information for students at risk of reading difficulty, but also alerts teachers to students who demonstrate above grade-level skills and who may be further screened for specialized placements, such as high ability students. One such measure is SAGES-2, published by PRO-ED. This test assesses aptitude and achievement and requires special administration qualifications. The Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (GATES), also published by PRO-ED, is another instrument that assesses the characteristics, skills, and talents of gifted students. The following flowchart provides a suggested decision-making approach for the screening process. [19]

[19] Johnson & Pool, RtI Action Network

Screening Assessment Decision-Making Flowchart



Progress Monitoring

To be effective, instruction must be responsive to student needs. This means knowing students' challenges and building on their strengths in a timely manner. Ongoing and continuous progress monitoring enables teachers to determine whether students are demonstrating critical skills and making adequate progress toward grade-level goals. Progress-monitoring assessments should inform educators about the extent to which students are reaching important reading outcomes and specific skills, and the extent to which students are learning what they are being taught. Not all students are equally responsive to the instruction they are receiving. They may require instructional modifications. In addition, progress-monitoring assessments such as DIBELS measures, coupled with curriculum-embedded assessments (see the upcoming section on curriculum-embedded assessments) and standards-based periodic measures (Acuity for grades 3–8), may reveal patterns of student performance that indicate the need for specific professional development.

Progress monitoring assessments are similar to well-checks provided by doctors. They tell educators whether students are progressing on a positive trajectory to meet goals or whether they need intervention.

Continuous assessment is important to be sure students are on pace to meet end-of-year reading goals. Assessments should be administered as part of the regular instructional routine: weekly, biweekly, or monthly, depending upon the extent of student need.[20] Progress-monitoring assessments may be likened to the health-care "well-checks" pediatricians use to screen and monitor the growth and development of infants. Young children are weighed and measured regularly to determine if growth is progressing along typical developmental patterns. If growth rates are within the normal range, the doctor does not recommend interventions. When growth rates depart significantly from what is expected, the doctor may introduce dietary changes or medication. While these interventions

[20] Indiana's Response to Instruction (RtI) Guidance Document, 2010, p. 22

take place, monitoring becomes more frequent. This same model applies to teaching and learning.[21] Students who are reading below grade level need to accelerate their progress in order to "catch up." Consequently, regular and timely assessment assists teachers in making instructional changes sooner rather than later.

Frequency of progress monitoring depends upon the level of student risk. For students demonstrating low risk and making good progress toward grade-level goals, implementing screening/benchmarking assessments three times a year may be sufficient. However, for students demonstrating some or moderate risk for reading problems, assessing every two to four weeks is desirable. For students at high risk and significantly below expectations, assessing every one to two weeks is vital. In addition to these general recommendations, various commercial intervention programs contain built-in progress-monitoring tools. Assessment should follow the guidelines and timing of the specific intervention curriculum. The following table summarizes general timing recommendations for progress-monitoring assessments for students at all levels.

Level of Need/Risk	Skill Level	Frequency of Progress Monitoring[22]
Low risk	Meeting or exceeding grade-level goals	Screening only three times a year using formative or screening measures noted on the previous pages
Moderate risk	Somewhat below grade level; Tier 2 supplemental intervention	One to two times per month
High risk	Well below grade level; Tier 3 intensive intervention	Once a week or every two weeks

[21] Deno, 2009
[22] Indiana's Response to Instruction (RtI) Guidance Document, 2010, p. 22

Educators should have access to many efficient resources for progress monitoring that may be used repeatedly and as often as needed. A chart of progress-monitoring tools is available through the National Center on Response to Intervention. Two types of progress-monitoring assessments are important to have in a school's Assessment Plan: assessments for mastery monitoring (MM) and assessments for general outcome measurement (GOM). Mastery monitoring is based on testing small component reading skills, such as phonics elements and measuring progress until mastery. General outcome measures, such as oral reading fluency, measure the performance of students on a single task that can be repeatedly assessed to monitor changes in performance. DIBELS contains general outcome measures. If students do not perform successfully on these measures, more precise diagnostic testing is necessary. Once a student is receiving an intervention, assessments for mastery monitoring become important.

Key Terms

Mastery Monitoring:
A progress monitoring assessment that can be used to measure progress in attaining a small subskill of reading, such as specific phonics elements.

General Outcome Measure:
A broader single task, such as timed oral reading, that can show the change over time in achieving the desired outcome.

In both primary and upper grades, the specific progress-monitoring tools to be administered depend on the skill needs of the students. Three-times-a-year screening assessments are the first line of progress monitoring for *all* students.

Validated Kindergarten Reading Progress-Monitoring Measures[23]

Because phoneme segmentation and letter-sound fluency are two measures that relate closely to skills children need to master reading, the data from these two measures provide guidance for the kindergarten teacher's instruction. DIBELS (see chart that follows) includes these and other measures of early reading skills.

DIBELS 6			
	What is it?	**When Administered**	**Advantages**
Initial Sound Fluency (ISF)	Tester says the words, then the student says the initial sounds of as many words as possible within one minute.	Fall and winter. Use to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Considered a better target of instruction than rapid letter naming because it relates more directly to what students need to master to learn to read.
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	Tester says the words, then the student says the constituent sounds of as many words as possible within one minute.	Winter and spring. Use to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Considered a better target of instruction than rapid letter naming.
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	Tester presents randomly ordered upper- and lowercase letters, then the student names as many as possible within one minute.	Fall, winter, and spring. Use to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Easy to administer compared to phoneme segmentation; therefore, accuracy of administration tends to be stronger.
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	The student reads a page of consonant-vowel-consonant and some vowel-consonant nonwords and has one minute to read as many as possible.	Winter and spring. Use to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Easy to administer; therefore, accuracy of administration tends to be stronger. Also considered better target of instruction than rapid letter.

[23] Fuchs, RtI Action Network

Validated 1st Grade Reading Progress-Monitoring Measures[24]

Researchers have studied two different approaches to progress monitoring in grade 1. In one approach, students begin with screening on nonsense word fluency and then switch to passage reading fluency around January. DIBELS uses this same approach and includes a phoneme segmentation measure to ensure students maintain that skill. A second approach involves students reading for one minute from a page of 50 high-frequency words, as well as timed oral passage reading; the data from each measure are used to show progress toward established goals. The advantage of nonsense word fluency, however, is that it will help teachers identify the sounds students do not know. In both approaches, oral reading fluency is an important assessment used to track growth. The DIBELS assessment, used by some Indiana schools, include the following measures.

DIBELS 6			
	What is it?	**When Administered**	**Advantages**
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	The student produces verbally the individual phonemes for each word. The number of correct phonemes produced in one minute determines the final score.	Fall, winter, and spring. Used to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Relates directly to what students need to master to learn to read.
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	The student is given VC and CVC nonsense words (e.g., sig, rav, ov) and asked to verbally produce the individual letter sound or read the whole nonsense word. The final score is the number of letter-sounds produced correctly in one minute.	Fall, winter, and spring. Used to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Helps identify sounds students may not know and may be used as mastery monitoring if it includes all phonics elements for first grade. Cannot compare growth from fall to spring.
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)	The student is presented with grade-level text and reads aloud for one minute while the tester marks errors.	Winter and spring. Used to track progress every one to two weeks based on risk level.	Easy to administer and growth can be tracked over time. Recommend for checking expression and intonation.

[24] Fuchs, RtI Action Network

Validated 2nd through 6th Grade Reading Progress-Monitoring Measures[25]

In grades 2 and 3, "reading fluency measures provide the strongest source of reading development information."[26] At grade 4 and above, however, research suggests that the validity of an oral reading fluency test may decrease. In fact, students in the upper grades generally only need to be monitored more frequently if they are not meeting grade-level targets and are receiving supplemental or intervention support. The Acuity Predictive and Diagnostic tests serve to monitor progress at preset, limited times. More frequent progress monitoring for older students should be determined by the specific skill needs of the students and the supplemental and intervention programs used. CBM Maze or a periodic comprehension measure may be a useful progress-monitoring tool starting in grade 4 for students below grade level because it directly taps into some aspects of comprehension.[27] For upper grade students, teachers may use oral reading fluency measures to monitor the progress of those students below grade level, and for students in grade 2, the DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency Test may also be used to monitor progress. The following chart shows measurement resources for progress monitoring students in grades 2 and 3 and below grade-level students in grades 2–6. For grades 4–6, the oral fluency and maze measures would be necessary only for students demonstrating poor performance on other comprehension measures.

[25] Fuchs, RtI Action Network
[26] Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988
[27] Espin, 2006

	What is it?	When Administered	Advantages
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	The student reads a page of phonetically regular nonwords and has one minute to read as many as possible.	Fall (for grade 2 only). Use to track progress every one to two weeks **only** if determined to be a skill gap.	Helps identify sounds students may not know and may be designed, for mastery monitoring if it includes all phonics elements and even multisyllabic words.
CBM Oral Reading Fluency	The student is presented with grade-level text and reads aloud for one minute while the tester marks errors.	Fall, winter, and spring (grades 2 and 3 only). This may be administered weekly or biweekly based on risk level. Useful to progress monitor older students who are below grade level.	Easy to administer and growth can be tracked over time.
CBM Maze[28]	The student is presented with a passage from which every seventh word has been deleted and replaced with three possible choices, only one of which truly makes sense. The student has three minutes to read and replace the blanks, and he or she is scored on the number of correct choices.	Fall, winter, and spring (grades 4–6 for students receiving intervention). This may be used more frequently to monitor progress in students in intervention programs.	CBM Maze has demonstrated strong reliability and is best coupled with CBM Oral Reading Fluency.

The DIBELS assessments include the types of progress-monitoring measures just noted with the exception of CBM Maze. Other resources are available through the RtI Action Network and easyCBM.

Using Progress-Monitoring Data

For progress-monitoring assessments to be useful, the data must be promptly available to teachers. The assessments themselves should be easy to administer in order to minimize the loss of instructional time. Because progress-monitoring assessments must be given frequently to high-risk students, teachers

[28] Espin, 2006

need access to alternate forms of the same difficulty level to track student performance growth on a set scale. As soon as data is available, teachers should analyze the information to determine if students require a change in instruction. To determine if students are correctly placed, need more intensive intervention, or are able to be successful in core instruction without further supports, a school should set growth targets to use for making decisions. As an example, the following table shows suggested growth rates on Oral Reading Fluency CBM that can be used to establish decision rules.[29]

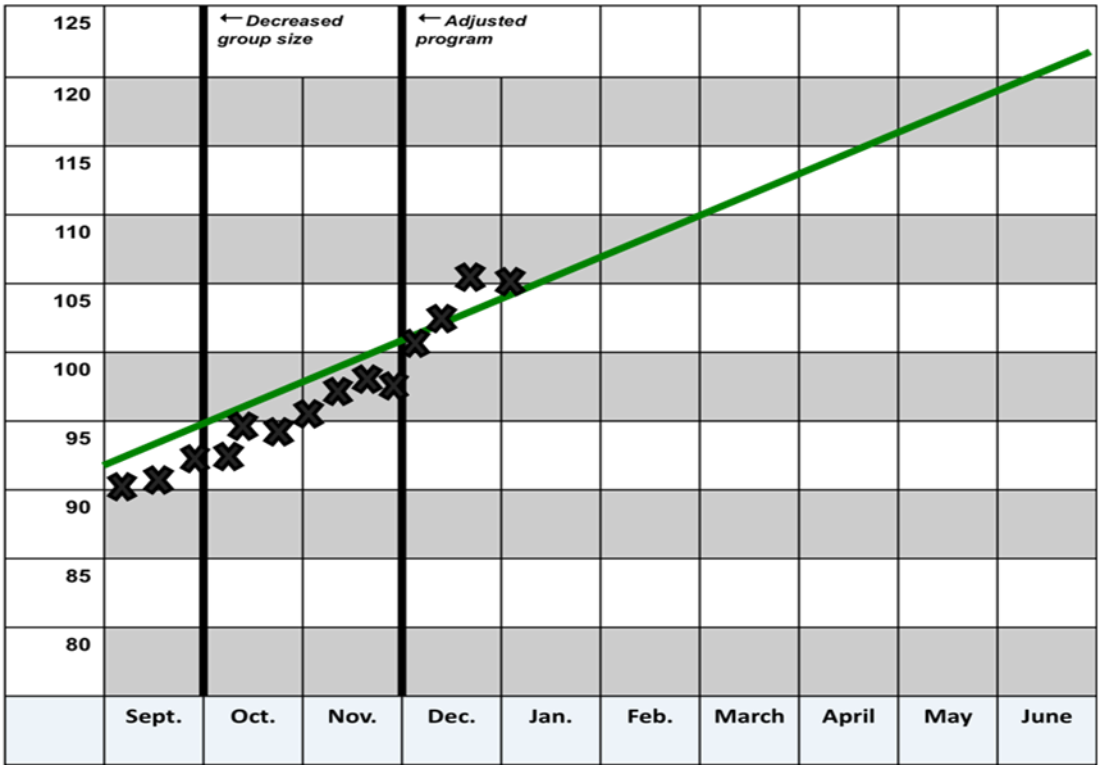
Grade	Reasonable Words Correct per Week Growth Rates	Ambitious Words Correct per Week Growth Rates
1	2 words correct per week	3 words correct per week
2	1.5 words correct per week	2–3 words correct per week
3	1 word correct per week	1.5–3 words correct per week
4	.85–1 words correct per week	1.5–3 words correct per week
5	.5–1 words correct per week	1.5–3 words correct per week
6	.3–1 words correct per week	1.5–3 words correct per week

Developing readers increase their number of words read correctly every year while in elementary school. The largest growth occurs in grade 1, while students in the upper grades typically make less growth. Once growth rates are understood, teachers can monitor student progress in relation to an expected rate of growth on an aimline graph (see example that follows). After selecting a weekly improvement target (e.g., 1.5 WRC improvement per week), teachers compute an aimline using this formula: goal = (number of weeks of instruction x rate of improvement) + baseline median. Teachers then plot this information onto the student's aimline chart, beginning at the baseline and continuing to the goal throughout the period of instruction. Various online systems are available for

[29] Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlet, Walz, & Germann, 1993

teachers to plot this information, including DIBELS, AIMSweb, Edcheckup, and easyCBM. Another useful resource is the University of Washington CBM-R Growth Calculator available at http://www.fluentreader.org/calc.html.

As illustrated in the graph below, the line represents the student's expected rate of growth using normal growth rates and established targets. The line begins prior to intervention and continues to the point at which the goal should be met. The student is then monitored frequently, and when a number of specific predetermined data points fall below the aimline, an instructional change is necessary. A general rule of thumb is that three to six consecutive data points below the aimline warrant an instructional change. When a change occurs a vertical line notes the change point. In the following example, the student's intervention plan changed in November, resulting in consistent progress.



Curriculum-Embedded Assessments and Standards-Based Progress Monitoring

In addition to standardized progress-monitoring measures such as those in DIBELS, it is also important to use the curriculum-embedded assessments that accompany most core and intervention programs and any standards-based formative or predictive measures aligned to state standards.[30] These assessments can provide useful information to help teachers determine the degree to which students are actually learning what has been taught, whether students require reteaching, or even whether teachers may benefit from further professional development with identified curriculum components in order to get better results. Most commercial programs contain four useful curriculum-embedded assessments:

- ☑ Core program inventory
- ☑ Core program unit or theme skill tests
- ☑ Core intervention program mastery tests
- ☑ Placement tests

Core program inventory samples a broad range of skills on a certain reading component, such as phonics or comprehension. Teachers then use information from these assessments to design small-group instruction using the core, supplemental, extension or intervention materials.

Core program unit or theme skill tests are useful to assess students on the skills they have been recently taught in that section of the program and on previous sections. Teachers then can use this information to identify any content that should be reviewed for the whole class, for small groups, or for individuals. Grade-level teams can use the information from these tests to determine whether individual teachers or entire grades are having difficulty with certain program content and can work collaboratively, assisting each other to improve instruction.

[30] For grades 3–8, Indiana has used CTB Acuity.

Intervention program mastery tests gauge whether or not students reach a designated performance standard before advancing in the curriculum. Teachers can use information from these assessments to determine whether students are ready to move on, are in need of repeated practice, or would benefit from reteaching of prior lessons. Many intervention programs provide specific steps to take based on student performance on the mastery tests. These tests can help teachers determine student placement within the intervention.

Placement tests are used by teachers to assess student strengths and weaknesses in relation to the skills taught in the program. Although placement tests provide a starting point, mastery tests will refine the placement decision.

Acuity Predictive and Diagnostic Assessments

In addition to the assessments noted previously, Indiana uses Acuity assessments that are directly aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards. The Predictive version of Acuity serves as an indicator of expected student performance on ISTEP+. When administered in advance of ISTEP+ the assessment data provides information that will enable a teacher to make informed instructional decisions. Acuity Diagnostic tests, which are administered more frequently, provide detailed information aligned to the standards to enable a teacher to pinpoint areas requiring greater instructional emphasis. Acuity Predictive assessments in grades 3-8 include open-ended items that can be scored locally. Additional assessments should also be used to monitor students' attainment of performance-based standards.

Diagnostic Assessment

Some students will continue to struggle even after receiving intervention and additional support. If students continue to fall behind, as demonstrated on two to three consecutive weekly progress-monitoring assessments, they will have great difficulty ever catching up. For these students, more precise diagnostic measures, usually commercially designed, will pinpoint specific difficulties.

Administration of a formal, standardized diagnostic assessment serves two fundamental purposes. First, it will help teachers understand underlying causes of poor reading performance, and second, it will help teachers understand a student's instructional needs. A formal diagnostic assessment will help teachers know whether a specific disability is present and is inhibiting progress. Formal diagnostic measures are designed to ensure technical adequacy, which is necessary to determine the presence of a disability. The most useful purpose of diagnostic assessment is to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness and to design instruction that addresses the student's instructional needs. If the student has a disability, the instruction is usually developed in the context of special education; more often, the diagnostic assessments will help the general education teacher design supplemental or even more intensive interventions with the goal of catching these students up. Formal diagnostic assessments are intended for use only when students demonstrate continued poor progress despite interventions implemented with fidelity. Informal specific skill measures and those noted previously under progress monitoring and curriculum-embedded assessments may be sufficient to plan instruction for most students.

If students are at or above grade level or making adequate progress to meet goals, formal diagnostic tests are unnecessary. Since these tests are lengthy and time consuming, administering them without an indicated need is a poor use of limited school resources. Since the results of formal diagnostic tests are to be used to provide highly specialized and intensive interventions, the goal is to administer these tests only to those students who are truly not responding to previously implemented, targeted interventions. For most students, screening and progress-monitoring tests, coupled with specific curriculum-embedded assessments, will be sufficient to enable teachers to carefully implement supplemental instruction or intensive tiers of instructional intervention. The following chart lists a set of diagnostic measures reviewed by the Florida Center for Reading Research.

Diagnostic Measures

Diagnostic	Grade Range		Administration		
	K–3	4–6	Individual	Group	Time
(CTOPP) Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing	**PreK–3**	**All**	**X**		**30 min.**
(DAR) Diagnostic Assessment of Reading, 2nd ed.	**K–3**	**All**	**X**		**20–30 min.**
(EVT) Expressive Vocabulary Test	**K–3**	**All**	**X**		**15 min.**
Fox in a Box	**K–2**		**X**		**30 min.**
(GMRT) Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, 3rd ed.	**PreK–3**	**All**	**X**	**X**	**55–105 min.**
(GORT-4) Gray Oral Reading Test-4	**1–3**	**All**	**X**		**20–30 min.**
(GRADE) Group Reading Assessment & Diagnostic Evaluation	**PreK–3**	**All**	**X**	**X**	**45–90 min.**
(PPVT-III) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – III	**PreK–3**	**All**	**X**		**12 min.**
(SDRT) Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, 4th ed.	**1–3**	**All**		**X**	**100 min.**
(TPRI) Texas Primary Reading Inventory	**K–2**		**X**		
(WDRB) Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Battery	**K–3**	**All**	**X**		**50–60 min.**
(WRMT) Woodcock Reading Mastery Test	**K–3**	**All**	**X**		**10–30 min.**

Summative or Outcome Assessments

Presently ISTEP+ serves as the only statewide outcome measurement for elementary students. ISTEP+ provides a composite score for English/language arts and writing. Beginning in Spring 2012, IREAD-3 will measure Indiana Academic Standards 1, 2, and 3 and will align with Common Core State Standards Reading Foundational Skills, Reading Literature, and Reading Informational Text as those standards are fully implemented.

Comprehensive Reading Assessment Plan

Each school should have a comprehensive assessment plan aligned to Indiana's plan for Response to Instruction that identifies the assessment measures the school will use to guide instructional decisions about screening, progress monitoring, diagnosing specific instructional needs, meeting summative outcomes, as well as to determine overall program effectiveness.[31] The following table displays the essential purposes of reading assessments, their key features, the students to whom they apply, and the important questions that are addressed by each assessment purpose.[32]

Purposes and Features of Reading Assessments			
Purpose	**Educational Question**	**Key Features**	**Who is assessed?**
Screening	Is the student at risk of reading problems?	Brief; predictive of reading outcomes	All students (usually 3 times a year)
Progress Monitoring	Is the student making sufficient progress toward reading goals?	Brief; alternate forms for multiple administrations and sensitive to small changes over time	Students not meeting reading expectations and in interventions
Curriculum-Embedded Assessments	Are most students learning what is being taught? Do teachers need assistance with selected program components in order to improve student responses?	Directly from the core or intervention curriculum; measure of content taught in specific segments of the curriculum	All students in those programs based on program guidelines
Diagnosing Instructional Needs	What specific instructional need does a student have that will improve his/her rate of progress toward reading goals?	Provides in-depth instructional profile	Students who are not making adequate progress despite interventions
Summative Evaluation	Is the student reading at grade level and meeting standards? Is our instruction and/or is the program appropriate?	Comprehensive measure of overall reading proficiency and school performance	All students

[31] Torgesen & Miller, 2009
[32] Adapted from the Oregon K–12 Literacy Framework, 2010

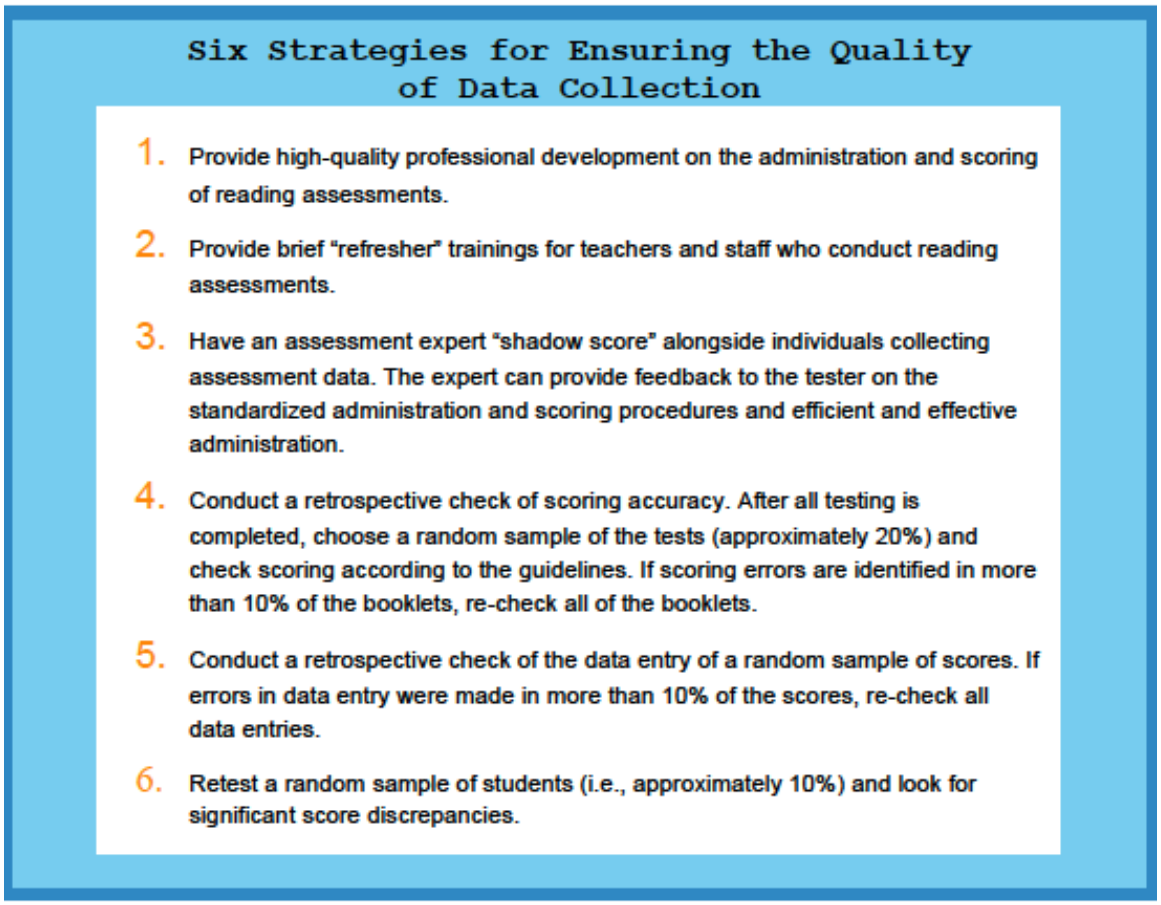
Some assessments may be used for multiple purposes. For example, an early literacy indicator, such as Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, is used for both screening and progress monitoring. ISTEP+ provides summative data at the end of a year, and that data may also serve as initial screening for the beginning of the subsequent year. The Reading Plan (described in the "Commitment" section) will include the assessments used by a school to address the Educational Questions presented in the table on the previous page.

Collecting Reliable and Valid Data

Assessments must be reliable, valid, and useful for the intended purposes. A *reliable* assessment means that the data obtained will be similar regardless of the number of testing times, number of testing settings, use of different versions, or testing by different examiners. If an assessment is not reliable, it cannot be *valid*. A valid assessment measures what it is intended or designed to measure, for example, an oral reading fluency test measures rate and accuracy of oral reading. Information about the reliability and validity of an assessment is usually available in the test manual. The Florida Center for Reading Research and the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring are useful sources to evaluate the reliability and validity of assessment measures.

In order to ensure accuracy of assessment data, all individuals responsible for completing the assessments need to have been appropriately trained. LEAs may use carefully trained school teams to complete screening assessments. Designated teams trained to administer all screening tests can do so efficiently and accurately. In fact, many schools avoid having teachers screen or give summative tests to their own students in order to avoid questions about the data's accuracy. However, with adequate preparation and practice, teachers also can effectively and efficiently administer assessments.

The Oregon Department of Education has identified six strategies for ensuring the quality of data collection.[33]



Using Data to Guide Instructional Decisions

Assessment data will be used to make instructional decisions for individual students and to inform a school's entire system of reading instruction. First, data is used to make decisions about an individual student. For example, screening data may identify a student at risk for reading difficulty and lead to an immediate plan for extra support within the classroom. Progress-monitoring data is used to indicate whether a student is making adequate progress toward a goal, and if any instructional changes are necessary. Second, student assessment data assists

[33] Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework, 2010

the school in making decisions about its system of reading instruction, the quality of teaching, the quality of the materials used, and the need for professional development.

The basic idea is simple. When only a few students are experiencing difficulty and demonstrating insufficient progress, the teachers can focus on ways to improve reading instruction to meet the specific needs of individual students. However, when many students are neither meeting established goals nor making adequate progress, it becomes critical for the school and teachers to consider the overall program and the support needed for teachers when developing a plan to increase reading performance. When grade-level teams examine data, patterns and trends may emerge that indicate many teachers are having difficulty with instruction of a specific skill. If so, the school leadership can tailor professional development and in-classroom support to address this need. It may be possible that only selected teachers are having more difficulty than others, and targeted assistance may be necessary to support such teachers.

When many students are struggling, whether in selected classrooms or throughout the school, it is important for the school to view this as a system-level issue and make decisions that will improve instruction for large numbers of students. When underlying system-level problems—for example, insufficient training on a new program—are addressed only on an individual student level, they will continually have to be addressed and will soon overwhelm school resources. By carefully analyzing data to determine whether underlying system-level issues are occurring and then addressing those alongside individual issues, schools will be able to simultaneously improve instruction while reducing the likelihood that more students may have reading difficulty. Schools will increase the odds that more students will become strong readers by addressing system-level needs swiftly. When the system is not overwhelmed by a large number of many below-grade-level students, those individual students still identified as at-risk can receive the targeted interventions they need.

Making Decisions for Individuals

The first step in making appropriate instructional decisions for individual students is to use the screening data to determine the student's reading level (e.g., reading at a level of proficiency to meet grade-level goals, met the identified formative goals, or performing well above grade level). If the student is performing below expectations, then the school identifies the necessary instructional support, sets data decision rules, and establishes a progress-monitoring plan (for example, a school may decide to monitor a student by using a particular assessment every week). Generally, instructional support and progress monitoring continue even when the student makes adequate progress. If the student is not making adequate progress, the school will need to fully analyze the situation and determine the reason for the lack of progress. The school should consider all three of these reasons when analyzing a student's lack of progress:

1. The *level of support* that is to be provided is not actually occurring. For example, if a grade 3 student was to have repeated oral reading fluency practice each day, but has not received such practice, then the support has not been provided.
2. The *quality of support* is not what the student needs to be successful. For example, the passages provided to a student for oral reading practice are too difficult.
3. The *level and quality of support are implemented as intended* and the student is still not making adequate progress. In this case an instructional change is needed.

When students continue to make insufficient progress despite the intended quality and level of support, the school will need to find ways to increase the intensity of the support provided. Implementation variables to consider include time of instruction, content, programs and materials, grouping

for instruction, and coordination with others. The following table shows implementation variables that can be altered to increase instructional intensity.

Element	Specific Adjustments[34] Less Intense → More Intense				
Instructional Time	Increase attendance.	Provide instruction daily.	Increase response opportunities.	Vary schedule of easy/hard tasks/skills.	Add a second instructional period (double dose).
Program Efficacy	Preteach components of core program.	Use extensions of core program.	Supplement core with appropriate materials.	Replace current core program.	Implement a specially designed program.
Program Implementa-tion	Model lesson delivery.	Monitor implementation frequently.	Provide coaching and ongoing support.	Provide additional professional development.	Vary program schedule.
Grouping for Instruction	Check group placement.	Reduce group size.	Increase teacher-led instruction.	Provide individual instruction.	Change instructor.
Coordination of Instruction	Clarify instructional priorities.	Establish concurrent reading periods.	Provide complementary reading instruction across periods.	Establish communication across instructors.	Meet frequently to examine progress.

Making System-Level Decisions

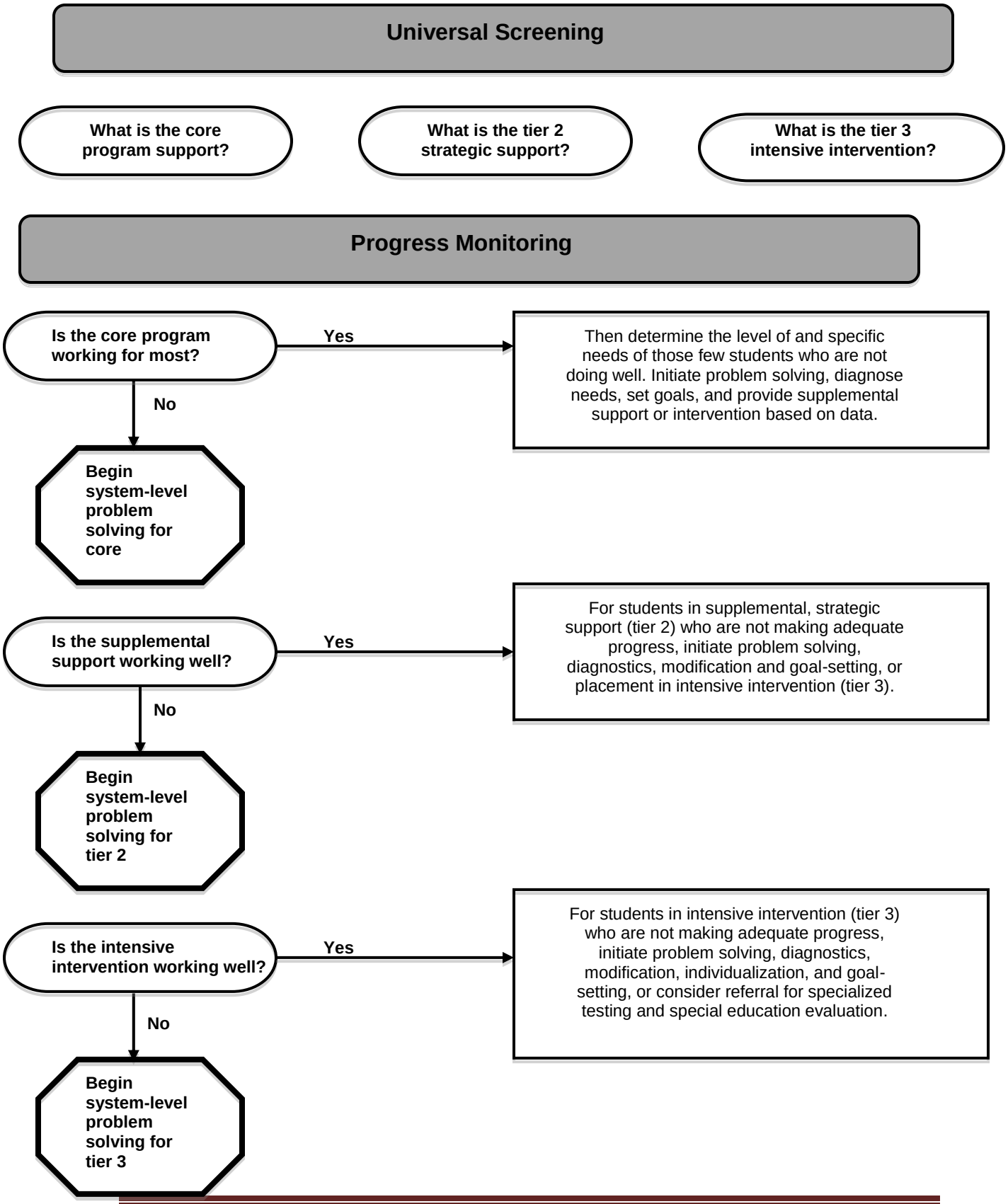
When it becomes evident that many students within certain classrooms or in the school as a whole are not meeting grade-level goals, the school should carefully examine its system of reading instruction. Data will assist the school staff to identify issues that need to be addressed. The first question to ask is the following: Is our system of reading instruction and support effective for at least 80% of students in our school? After careful examination of screening, progress monitoring, and summative data, the school might determine that reading instruction is highly effective, generally effective, or seriously ineffective. Based on the answer to the first question, the school should drill down more deeply to examine the system of reading instruction at *each grade level*, at *each level of*

[34] Oregon K–12 Literacy Framework, 2010

instruction (at or above grade level, somewhat below grade level, and well below grade level), and for *specific groups of students* (English Learners, students with disabilities, students with high mobility, disadvantaged students or high-ability students).

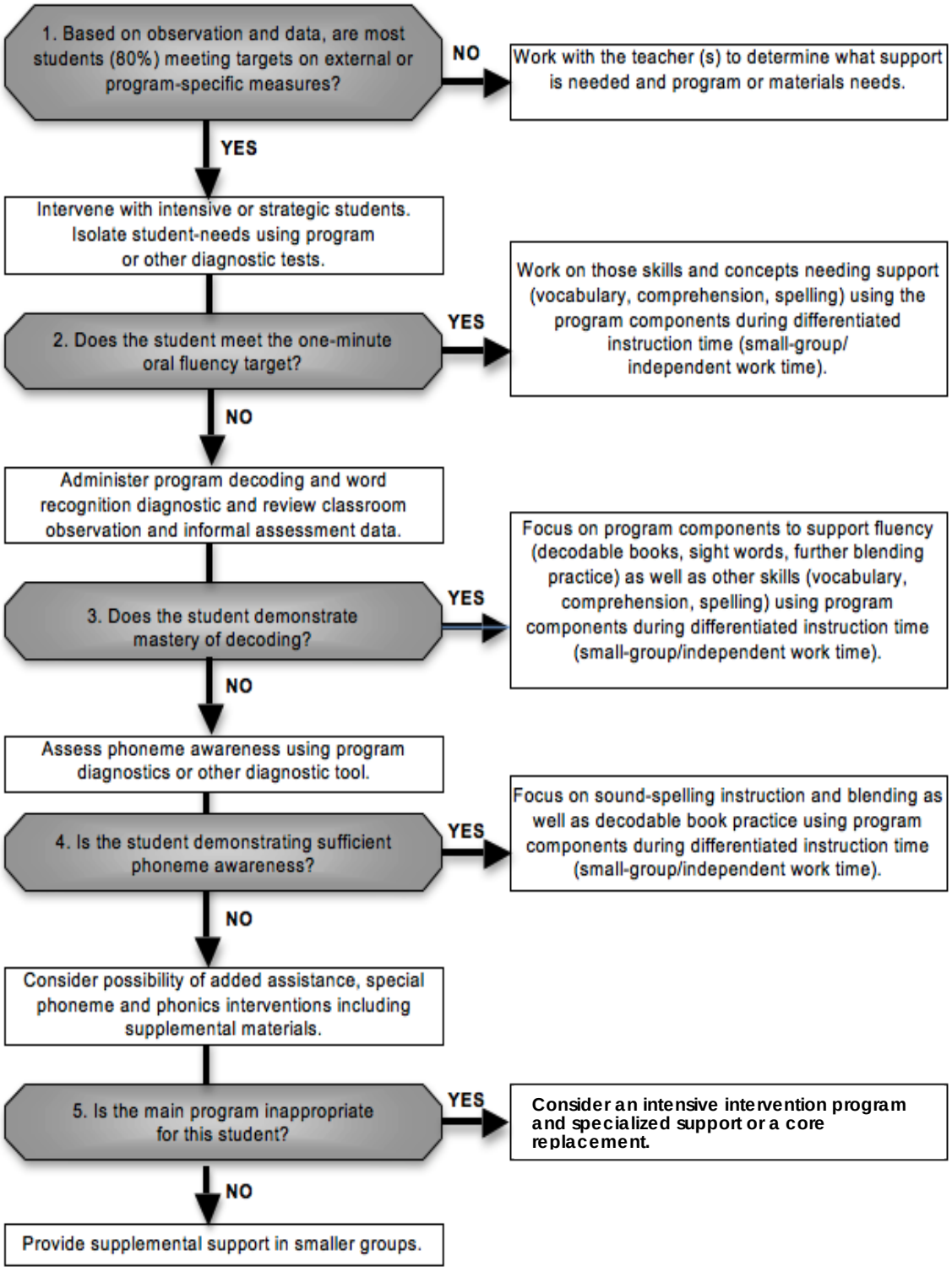
After analyzing data, a school may determine that students who began the year at or above grade level exceeded grade-level expectations. However, this same school may determine that students who started the year below grade level did not make sufficient progress to reach reading goals. The school can then use an organized decision-making process chart that is focused on data to make instructional decisions about individuals and groups of students. Two decision-making charts follow, one for examining the system as a whole and the other for focusing on individual students.[35]

[35] First chart adapted from Fien, Oregon Reading First Center, 2007; second chart from Diamond, 2005


Universal Screening
What is the core program support?
What is the tier 2 strategic support?
What is the tier 3 intensive intervention?
Progress Monitoring
Is the core program working for most?
Yes
Then determine the level of and specific needs of those few students who are not doing well. Initiate problem solving, diagnose needs, set goals, and provide supplemental support or intervention based on data.
No
Begin system-level problem solving for core
Is the supplemental support working well?
Yes
For students in supplemental, strategic support (tier 2) who are not making adequate progress, initiate problem solving, diagnostics, modification and goal-setting, or placement in intensive intervention (tier 3).
No
Begin system-level problem solving for tier 2
Is the intensive intervention working well?
Yes
For students in intensive intervention (tier 3) who are not making adequate progress, initiate problem solving, diagnostics, modification, individualization, and goal-setting, or consider referral for specialized testing and special education evaluation.
No
Begin system-level problem solving for tier 3

Assessment-Driven Instruction: A Systems Approach

to determine the locus of intervention: the school, teachers, and/or the students



Summary

A comprehensive assessment system, linked to formative reading goals and overall reading proficiency, is an essential component of a school's overall Reading Plan. An assessment system should serve five purposes: (1) screening, (2) monitoring student progress, (3) diagnosing specific causes of persistent reading difficulty and instructional needs, (4) evaluating overall reading performance, and (5) monitoring program and system effectiveness. Data from reading assessments should be used to make decisions about individual student instructional needs; the needs of groups of students; the quality and level of implementation of the core, supplemental, and intervention programs; and about teacher support and professional development needs. Schools should use reading assessment data to identify students who need added support and intensified progress monitoring and students who need high-ability curriculum, as well as teachers who would benefit from customized coaching time, and to determine if different materials are needed.